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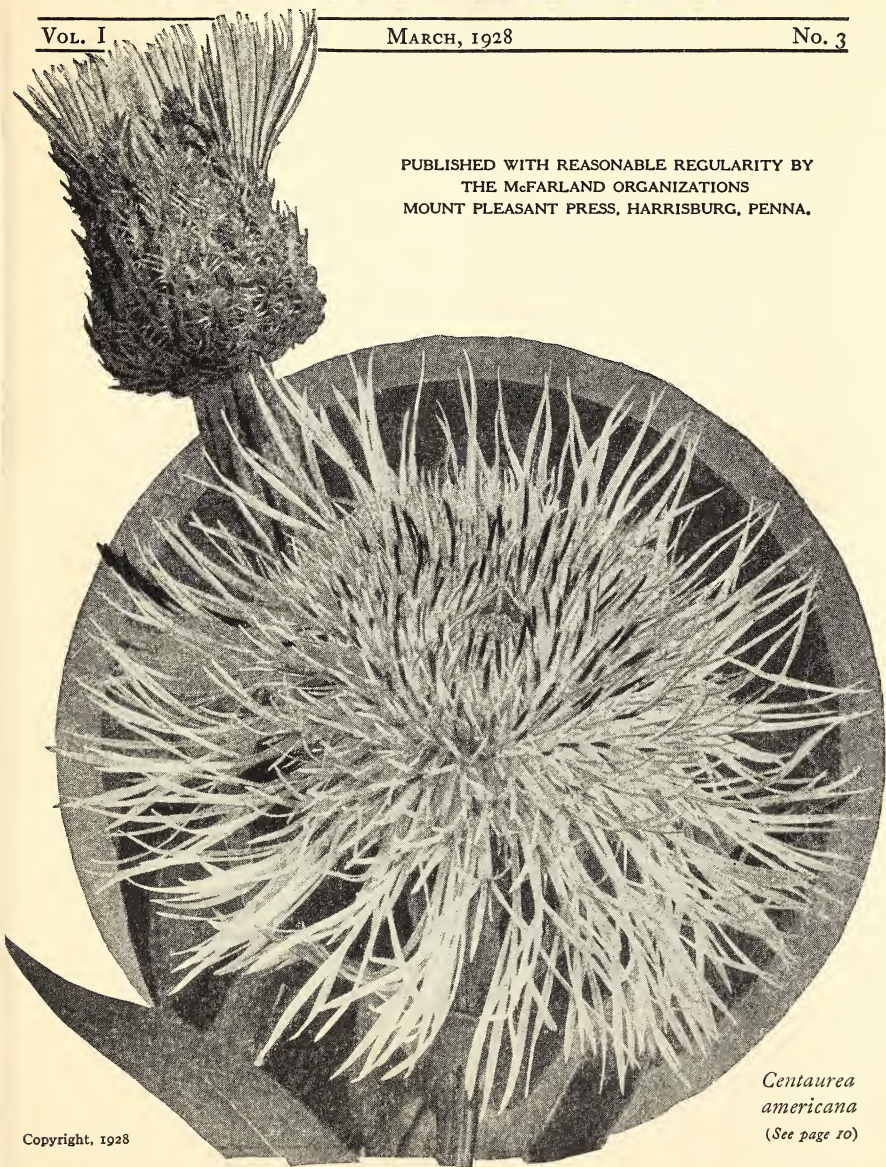
# BREEZE HILL NEWS

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*Centaurea  
americana*  
(See page 10)

## SOMETHING NEW IN ANNUALS?

WE ARE an optimistic lot at Breeze Hill. All gardeners are likely to be, and in spite of knowing pretty much about horticultural humbugs, we are still fairly gullible. But we find it increasingly difficult to grow excited about the novelties in annual flowers so blatantly announced in the spring seed catalogues (some of the best of which we print) and so alluringly illustrated in harmonious colors (even when it is done by our own art department).

BLANKETY-BLANK'S EGREGIOUS ASTERS have little lure for us when we know that Dam-Dam & Co. offers the same seed under the name of DAM-DAM'S MASTODONIC MAMMOTHS, and are equally wise to the fact that Bull-Bull is boosting them as BULL-BULL'S WORLD-BUSTING BOUNTIFUL BEAUTIES. For experience has taught us that whatever the original strain was that created this burst of eloquence, it is likely to be so deeply submerged or degraded when we get it that little or no novelty exists in the product itself.

We have a large, bare bone to pick with the growers and distributors of flower seeds in this country. Whether the seed is grown here or abroad, it matters not. The fact is painfully definite that rarely is any seed novelty offered in this country sufficiently "fixed" by the originator or his propagators to make it of any value to the grower.

Two years ago we grew a very charming French Marigold called Daybreak, or some such name. It came fairly true; we pulled up and threw away the few rogues and replaced them with the dozen or so plants we kept in reserve. This past season we tried it again. Scarcely one plant in ten was our old friend Daybreak! Gone was the lovely dwarf habit; the plants shot up into bushes three feet tall. Gone were the tiny, puckered, lemon-buff flowers; we had big, awkward

singles, and ugly browns of the old Legion of Honor type. Now why, I ask you, shouldn't that grower's seed have been even more nearly true in 1926 than in 1925?

Zinnias, too! Perhaps one in a hundred bears some resemblance to the introducer's glowing description. The others are weird colors, Mexican generals and nondescript ragamuffins.

Snapdragons are a snare and a delusion of the worst kind. Recently one of our customers sent us precious samples of seed of a dozen named "Snaps" which he wanted to illustrate in color in his catalogue. We grew them with meticulous care to keep the varieties separate and distinct. They bloomed, and we despaired! There was no way under the sun to say which was which! The plants in each group bore a general family resemblance, but which plants were the true varieties we could not tell. Whites and yellows were fairly true in color, but hopeless in variation of size and fullness of spikes; one lot supposed to be shell-pink comprised every hue from rosy white to salmon, including shades of magenta, cerise, rose, and cherry-red; lavenders were rose, magenta-brown and purple; crimsons were blotched purple and scarlet; scarlets were red, crimson, and an ugly brindle brown.

Petunias also are a crazy man's nightmare. We buy seed of white petunias, and a quarter of them come magenta, far, far too many to replace from our slender reserves. We order violet-velvets, and we get every shade of purple from lavender to violet, with some dingy crimsons thrown in for good measure.

Now this is not true of seeds bought from certain firms abroad. If Sutton sells us a pink snapdragon, for example, we can depend upon it to be uniformly pink—almost 100 per cent. If he sends us white petunias, they are white; if he sends us dwarf types of something, they are dwarf; but if we get them here, even from the most responsible houses, we never know what to expect.



Of course, we are assured that the seedsmen will replace unsatisfactory seeds, but that does no good. What use is a replacement of snapdragon seed in July when we discover the error? We have to wait until next year, and then may have the same experience over again.

What is the answer? Something ought to be done, but we can't do it. There is no pleasure and profit in growing named strains or varieties to find them so variable that we cannot be sure which is the true type for photographing or for recording color. No seedsman ought to sell that kind of seed, anyway. The types ought to be well fixed by trial in this country and the seed grown to sell from the selected stocks should make good to a reasonable extent.

Consequently, new varieties of old annuals have ceased to interest us much; we are thoroughly tired of being fooled. So last summer we decided to satisfy our desire for novelties by searching out unusual flowers, the sorts that are commonly overlooked or passed up by the seedsmen and gardeners. We ordered lavishly from the catalogues which specialized in the most outlandish and unfamiliar names. We struggled with Bailey's Cyclopedia and with the botanies to find cultural hints, and we gave over a large part of our trial-beds to them. We had a lot of fun, and we discovered some very pretty and interesting things. Re-discovered is a better word, because we cannot claim that any of them are new; they are merely neglected. Perhaps there are good reasons for the neglect, but such reasons were not apparent to us in last summer's trials.

So this issue of Breeze Hill News bears pictures of several uncommon annual flowers, and we recommend to our seedsmen friends that they put a little sales effort on some of these which are truly distinct and worthy, and which will grow and bloom as they are described. Such a course might take a little of the bad taste out of the mouths of a great many customers who have bit too often on the lure of novelties that were nearly nuisances.—G. A. S.

FROM THE BREEZE HILL  
NOTEBOOKS

AS PART of Breeze Hill's contribution to the horticultural printing business which supports it, a very careful record is made of all things grown there or sent there for testing. Besides the photographs and the color-notes we have many pages of notebooks filled with information concerning the flowers and fruits at Breeze Hill. From the 1927 entries we quote the following paragraphs to amplify the pictures on pages 6 and 7. Many of the cultural details are omitted:

*Layia elegans*. The common name of this little Californian annual is Tidy Tips. The bed of it at Breeze Hill was a low mass of flowers  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches across, pure yellow, with a band of cream-white around the edges about one-sixteenth of an inch wide. The centers of the flowers were rich gold at first; later black filaments protruded, tipped with golden anthers. It is a pretty little thing, easily and quickly grown, and is much more graceful than the Annual Chrysanthemums which it so much resembles.

We grew it in full sunlight, in a rather dry place. It lasted in full flower about a month, from June 25 to July 25, and then disappeared with amazing suddenness. Its short season of beauty should give it value as a temporary filler between early and late flowers—Tulips and Chrysanthemums, for example.

*Dianthus heddwigi*, *The Mikado*. This is surely the finest of the innumerable varieties of *Dianthus chinensis*, that most fascinating species of a most diversified genus. The variety of colors and markings is simply marvelous—and the size of the blooms is a revelation to those of us who have heretofore been content with such inferior things as Crimson Belle, Eastern Queen, Single Princess, Vesuvius, and the







*Layia elegans*



*Nemophila insignis*



*Hebenstreitia comosa*



*Nolana grandiflora*



*Cacalia coccinea*



*Dianthus hedderwigi, The Mikado*



*Saponaria multiflora*



*Brachycome iberidifolia*

like. A variety called Marvelous, from an American source, equaled Mikado in size and grace of marking but was poor in color.

We know of nothing better than this *Dianthus* for a massed bed or a line, and a flat bowl arranged with a mass of them is superb. It is a good trick to slip a few of the very fragrant *D. allwoodi* among these beautiful but scentless flowers to supply the one thing the Mikado lacks. It flowered in late June from seed sown March 21.

*Nemophila insignis*. Another Californian, called Baby Blue Eyes and Love-Grove. We set out plants about May 1 from seeds sown the last of March, but they were too leggy and the bed was not a success. We believe it is better not to start this pretty thing indoors. Apparently, too, it wants a little shade. The flowers are pure blue, large and extremely attractive, but last less than a month. Doubtless several sowings would carry it over a longer season; but it seems unnecessary to go to that bother since there are so many different things which could be tried.

We like this little plant and intend to find out how to have it, even if only for a very brief season every summer.

*Saponaria multiflora*. That is what it was labeled, and multiflora (many-flowered) is certainly right. Planted rather thickly it made a mass of foliage, sparsely studded at first with tiny pink stars which rapidly increased to a bewildering mass of pink until the bed was an outstanding feature of the garden. Easily the greatest "find" in annuals of the season. It lasted in good condition from July 10 until September 15, which is enough to expect from any annual. For edging or lines it ought to be planted 2 inches apart—for mass bedding 6 inches is close enough. The correct name of this plant is doubtless *Saponaria calabrica multiflora*. We recommend it highly.

*Nolana grandiflora*. A curious, awkward, prostrate plant, with dull blue flowers like Morning-Glories. We did not find



it so attractive as interesting for its peculiar, eccentric growth. It did not do well; we must try it again and see if we cannot get something out of it.

*Cacalia coccinea*. Bailey's Cyclopedia calls this one of the easiest and most common annuals. We agree that it is easy, but it is certainly not common, although it ought to be. Its tassel-like flowers are borne on slender stems a foot and a half long and are splendid when cut. The plant carries on the effect of the Heucheras which vanish at the end of June—but, of course, is nothing like them. In fact, the flowers resemble nothing so much as scarlet lettuce blossoms or Hawkweeds. It seeds very freely, and plants flowered from self-sown seed the same season. It surely looks like a hardy annual, and possibly a weed; and we hope it is—we seldom have to cope with such pleasant enemies. Apparently the correct name of the plant is *Æmilia flammea*.

*Brachycome iberidifolia*. The Swan-River Daisy is certainly no novelty—yet how seldom is it seen! We used it to edge a bed of late Gladiolus and to fill in bare spaces anywhere. The accommodating little plants were shifted around quite recklessly, even when in full bloom, and they did not seem to mind it. The picture shows that it can be charming when cut, too, and we got a great deal of pleasure from it. The colors are mostly blue and purple. The variety Little Blue Star did not seem to be any more uniformly blue than the common sort and no particular improvement in any other way.

*Hebenstreitia comosa*. From July 4 until late October we enjoyed this quaint annual. The slender whitish flower-spikes are not showy in themselves, but they make a peculiar, feathery effect, rising in innumerable little spires to 15 inches or more. A very useful thing it is for variety's sake and for long service. The spikes bloom slowly from the bottom and are ceaselessly produced. Even when allowed to seed it continues to grow and bloom. One of the best

things about it is that it needs no staking or tying up. The compact plants sit firmly in their places, and the wiry stems are stiff enough to stand erect without support.

*Centaurea americana*. We are beginning to admire the whole race of *Centaureas* very much at Breeze Hill. No flowers are more gracefully beautiful for cutting than the Sweet Sultans, and the pure blue of the Cornflowers is unequalled. We also like the persistent blooming habit of *C. montana*, and the ease with which it may be grown. But until last summer the virile beauty of the only American in the family, *C. americana*, was missing from Breeze Hill.

We grew it in a deep, rich bed in full sun, but apparently it is indifferent to soil, because we are told by an experienced gardening friend that she sows it in a sterile field outside her garden and treats it as a common weed.

We found it a stout plant, growing 3 to 4 feet high, sufficiently rigid to need no stake, which is a blessing. The flowers are enormous (the picture on the front of this issue shows them nearly actual size), and the plants have a peculiarly attractive interlacing network of strawy bracts about them, which we presume is the characteristic that gives it the common name of Basket Flower. In general appearance the blooms were like gigantic pale bluish lilac Sweet Sultans. A few plants bore white flowers, but they were not so large. When cut, the center opens with the same fluffy delicacy as Sweet Sultans, but the outside rays relax and droop so that the effect is not so graceful.

Since it has become so difficult to grow good Asters in uniform masses, because of the "yellows," anything which provides an effect even remotely approaching them is welcome, and *C. americana* not only gives a fair imitation of the lavender and white Asters, but is also wholly worthy on its own account.

## 1928 PLANS FOR BREEZE HILL

AS THESE words are written there is an inclination to shift attention from the production of catalogues to the observation of the things they tell about. Since the beginning of November, the Mount Pleasant Press has been turning out an average of a little over a million catalogue pages a day, and their passing through the Press has whetted the desire of many of us to get outdoors.

Breeze Hill will undergo many changes in 1928. The vegetable-garden is being reduced to a minimum because the raising of food seems unimportant compared with the trial of ornamental items.

The new small-fruit garden, intended to connect us with raspberries not subject to the mosaic disease and, if possible, to restore the supremacy we enjoyed in strawberries a dozen years ago, has been planned as part of the vegetable-garden. (The neighbor whose father established "Bellevue" about the time of the Civil War has a record of filling a quart box with nine magnificent individual strawberries; and it is a certain fact that the day the present owner began living at Breeze Hill, June 1, 1909, the same neighbor handed him a box filled to the brim with only seventeen superb strawberries, each one of which was an event in itself.)

Then there is to be a little water-garden, which we will worry about just as soon as the condition of the ground permits us to dig. More lilies are waiting to be planted, even though we managed to get some of them into the ground in early March during a few frost-free days.

Roses, of course, are at hand, very many of them, and perhaps some of them may change our notions of favored varieties. Some from Spain, some on the way from England, and many from the best growers and producers in America are awaiting permanent places. We will have to discard regretfully some sorts which seem to have told us all they can about themselves.

Two years ago a little experiment with rock plants encouraged us to go further. Now, there isn't a natural rock in all Bellevue Park, where the soil is heavy clay shale. A kindly friend, who has a patch of old-time rocky woods, gave us the opportunity to possess ourselves of several truck-loads of weathered limestone boulders, which have been disposed in three or four places where they do look as if they were natural. In and about them we are beginning to hide and tuck the alpines that seem to be suitable, and we are hopeful, very hopeful, that we may discover new beauties for America from the many seed packets brought from abroad.

So it may be realized that the summer of 1928 will not be monotonous at Breeze Hill. There is some promise right now, because as these words are written, *Galanthus byzanthinus*, a different snowdrop, is actually peeping through the vanishing snow, and its dainty little blooms have had their white, closed sprays above ground since late January, not minding freeze or snow or sleet or storm.—J. H. McF.

**T**HE J. HORACE MCFARLAND COMPANY and the MCFARLAND PUBLICITY SERVICE publish BREEZE HILL NEWS to be sent without charge to those who may find it useful and to those who ask for it. The purpose is to acquaint readers with the unique facilities for satisfactory selling of worth-while plants, trees, seeds, bulbs, and horticultural service provided through the growing and testing done at Breeze Hill Gardens and the intelligent writing, illustrating, and printing done at the Mount Pleasant Press. Questions asked about plants, pictures, promotion, and printing are cheerfully answered, without obligation to either party. The Mount Pleasant Press in Harrisburg houses both organizations, and visitors to it and to the Breeze Hill Gardens are always welcome. The location of the Press is at Crescent and Mulberry streets (ten minutes from the Pennsylvania Railroad Station), and the mail address is Box 687, Harrisburg, Pa.